

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for making a long distance or international telephone call, comprising:

calling an assigned telephone number to access a sign-up calling plan service billed to a home plan at a home plan rate;

responding to a calling plan service announcement by entering the home telephone number associated with the sign-up calling plan service and a personal identification number to validate the caller; and

entering the long distance telephone number to complete the call.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the calling an assigned telephone number further comprises:

calling an assigned telephone number from a telephone other than the subscriber's home telephone.

3. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

after calling an assigned telephone number, responding to a calling plan service announcement by entering a selection responsive to whether the long distance call is to be billed to a home long distance calling plan, a calling card plan, or a toll-free calling plan.

4. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a calling plan service announcement containing a notice that the call cannot be completed and the reason why not.

5. A method for routing and billing a telephone call placed under a sign-up calling plan, comprising:

receiving a telephone call at an originating switch;

sending a query to a service control point and receiving in return a carrier identifier, the carrier identifier identifying a service provider associated with the received call;

routing the call to a service switching point associated with the service provider and encountering a trigger that identifies a service control point servicing the sign-up calling plan;

in response to the trigger, sending a query to the service control point servicing the sign-up calling plan and receiving in return an instruction to prompt the caller to input their home telephone number and personal identification number;

in response to the caller input, accessing a customer database from the service control point and retrieving the caller's sign-up calling plan;

prompting the caller to input the telephone number to be called;

checking the caller's sign-up calling plan for authorization to complete the call; and

in response to receiving call authorization, routing the call and generating a billing call record for the caller's sign-up calling plan.

6. The method of Claim 5, wherein the sign-up calling plan is a home long distance calling plan, a calling card plan, or a toll-free calling plan.

7. The method of Claim 5, wherein the receiving a telephone call comprises:

receiving a telephone call from a telephone other than the caller's home telephone.

8. The method of Claim 5, wherein:

the prompting the caller comprises prompting the caller via an instruction from the service control point to the service switching point; and

the routing the call and generating a billing call record is responsive to the service control point sending a routing message containing billing information to the service switching point.

9. The method of Claim 5, further comprising:

prompting the caller to select whether the call is to be billed to a home long distance calling plan, a calling card plan, or a toll-free calling plan.

10. The method of Claim 5, further comprising:

in response to receiving no call authorization, notifying the caller that the call cannot be completed and the reason why not.

11. A telephone system service control point having a processor programmed for:

accessing a customer database to retrieve a caller's sign-up calling plan in response to a caller placing a call to access the caller's sign-up calling plan service;

checking the caller's sign-up calling plan for authorization to complete the call in view of information input by the caller during the call, the information including at least one of the caller's home telephone number and the caller's personal identification number; and

authorizing the call and sending to a service switching point a message containing call information and billing information relating to the caller's sign-up calling plan.

12. The service control point of Claim 11, wherein the processor is further programmed for:

accessing a customer database to retrieve a caller's sign-up calling plan in response to a caller placing a call from a telephone other than the caller's home telephone.

13. The service control point of Claim 11, wherein the caller's sign-up calling plan is a home long distance calling plan, a calling card calling plan, or a toll-free calling plan.

14. The service control point of Claim 11, wherein the information input by the caller during the call further comprises a selection of whether the call is to be billed to a home long distance calling plan, a calling card plan, or a toll-free calling plan.

15. The service control point of Claim 11, wherein the information input by the caller during the call further comprises a selection of whether the call is an international call or not.